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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

1. Mideast
2. Anti-Terrorism Efforts

Key stories in the media:

Leading media quoted State Department Spokesman Ian Kelly as saying yesterday: QOur position is clear. We support the creation of a Palestinian state that is contiguous and viable. But we think that

the best way to achieve that is through negotiations by the two parties. And we understand that people might be frustrated, but ... we are convinced that this has to be achieved through negotiation between the two parties....

I can't say we're going to veto something we haven't seen or hasn't even been proposed yet. The Jerusalem Post and HaQaretz reported that yesterday a delegation of visiting U.S. lawmakers slammed the Palestinian plan to pursue unilateral statehood at the U.N as a waste of time and said that the U.S. would likely veto such a proposal should it come before the Security Council. Leading media reported that France also rejects the idea of unilateral Palestinian statehood.

Yediot (Simon Shiffer) reported that Israel is 'stunned' over a new U.S. demand -- to refrain from building in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Gilo. The daily reported that U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace Senator George Mitchell made the demand in a meeting with Attorney Yitzhak Molcho, the PM's liaison with the Americans on negotiations with the Palestinians. Mitchell allegedly claimed that construction in Gilo might thwart the resumption of negotiations with the Palestinians. Yediot cited the response of the Prime Minister's Office that there is no difference between construction in Jerusalem and in Tel Aviv.

Major media reported that yesterday six IDF soldiers in the West Bank held up a sign proclaiming their unit would refuse to evacuate West Bank settlements. This marks a shift in right-wing activity from attacks on Palestinians to protest in IDF ranks. Yesterday's protest, mounted by six soldiers of the Nachshon Battalion's West Bank base, followed the demolition of two illegal houses near the Negohot settlement south of Hebron. Military sources were quoted as saying that the soldiers were suspended and face a court martial. Yediot reported that the IDF conveyed a sharp message to the soldiers' rabbis, and that it intends to boycott yeshivas that will support rebels in IDF uniform. Israel Radio quoted high-ranking officers as saying that if it emerged that rabbis of hesder yeshivas (that combine religious studies and military service) had encouraged soldiers to disobey orders, the IDF would stop the arrangement with those yeshivas and their students would be drafted into regular army service.

The Jerusalem Post and other media cited the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) concern about possible further secret nuclear sites in Iran. Major media reported that IAEA inspectors are revisiting the suspected Syrian nuclear site of Dir al-Hajer.

The Jerusalem Post and HaQaretz reported that in a clear response to the pressure from the Obama administration for Israel to halt construction in east Jerusalem and the West Bank, a group of some 50 American Jews are currently here to weigh purchasing homes in those areas, and are advising other U.S. Jews to buy there as well. The delegation, led by New York State Assemblyman Dov Hikind, is in the middle of a four-day tour throughout the Jewish communities in the West Bank, and will conclude with a cornerstone-laying ceremony in the East Jerusalem community of Nof Zion tomorrow.

The Jerusalem Post reported that smuggling into Gaza from Egypt beneath the Philadelphi Corridor has returned to the busy levels that prevailed before Operation Cast Lead last winter.

HaQaretz cited data compiled by the Council of Higher Education and released yesterday, Israel ranks fourth in the world in scientific activity. The data, which dates to 2005, puts Israel behind Switzerland, Sweden, and Denmark in terms of the number of scientific publications per million citizens.

The media reported that yesterday FM Avigdor Lieberman created a brief government coalition crisis over what he said was too small a budget for new immigrants.

HaQaretz cited the satisfaction of Israeli defense establishment sources over the pace of development of Iron Dome, the short and medium range rocket defense system.

HaQaretz reported that yesterday Dr. Rafiq al-Husseini, Mahmoud Abbas's office director, called on the Arab states to cut their ties with two French companies -- Alstom and Veolia -- that take part in the construction of Jerusalem's light railway, whose route passes

through occupied territory.

HaQaretz quoted residents of Ras Hamis, an East Jerusalem neighborhood east of the separation fence, as saying that two children died in a house fire two weeks ago while a fire crew had to wait 200 meters away at a checkpoint for lack of Border Police or army escort. HaQaretz writes that Israeli fire and ambulance crews have reported that there have been numerous incidents in which their crews on the way to emergencies have been attacked by Palestinians.

Leading media reported that yesterday President Shimon Peres received a mixed welcome in Buenos Aires: beside a warm meeting with Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, thousands of people brought together by Islamic groups and left-wing parties demonstrated against the Israeli President, carrying such banners as: QPeres -- Nobel Prize in Murder.Q The Jerusalem Post quoted Peres as saying at a luncheon hosted in his honor by Kirchner that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad Qcarries the mark of Cain.

The Jerusalem Post quoted the head of the IDFQs Gaza Coordination and Liaison Administration, Col. Moshe Levi, as saying yesterday that humanitarian aid by various organizations has increased by close to 900% in 2009.

HaQaretz reported that the Association of Civil Rights in Israel is planning a march for human rights in Tel Aviv on Friday, December 11. The march is scheduled to coincide with international human rights week, which starts December 10. The organizers told HaQaretz that this would be the first such event in Israel. They were quoted as saying that previous rallies, marches, and protests all were held in the name of specific group interests.

All media reported that yesterday PM Benjamin Netanyahu announced yesterday that the duties of the next attorney general will not be split, as Justice Minister Yaakov NeQeman proposed doing several weeks ago. Netanyahu's decision is seen as a blow to NeQeman, who had spent months consulting with Israel's top jurists as he formulated his plan. Netanyahu told the selection committee that the next attorney general will fulfill the role in its current format, and the position will not be split. He said he had not made a final decision regarding the eventual future of the post, however.

Leading media reported that yesterday PM Netanyahu withdrew his request for a Knesset debate about the Qbiometric law.Q Some media said that this was a one-week postponement. HaQaretz reported that he feared a humiliation. The newspaper also reported that Israel has a database of 220,000 West Bank Palestinians -- without a law.

The Jerusalem Post cited a discussion between Israeli and Jordanian archeologists during UNESCOQs second annual World Heritage Workshop on QDisaster Risk: Reduction to Cultural Heritage Sites,Q which was held in Acre last week.

Yediot reported that Italian Jews are organizing against the candidacy of former Italian PM and FM Massimo DQalema to the post of EU policy chief. Yediot also reported that the Israeli Government is not intervening on this issue.

HaQaretz reported that Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) is moving certain production lines from Israel to the U.S. The production lines are being moved to group company Stark Aerospace, located in Starkville, Mississippi. Stark is technically a subsidiary of IAI International, which is the main U.S. subsidiary of the Israeli firm. Yesterday IAI inaugurated its new Stark plant to manufacture and assemble drones (small pilotless planes). Stark will also be making the electronic and electro-optic systems used by the drones. IAI commented, however, that none of the workers engaged in building drones in Israel will be fired. They will simply build drones for other countries.

HaQaretz reported that TIME Magazine called the Jerusalem-born DJ Kutiman (whose offline name is Ophir Kutiel) the Qmost famous DJ on YouTube.Q According to TIME, KutimanQs project, ThruYOU, has a simple premise: to create visual symphonies using random YouTube footage of school concerts, piano lessons, weirdly intimate soliloquies and American Idol-esque performances uploaded by people across the world.

1. Mideast:

I. The Return of the Illusionist

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (11/17): After uttering one hope-raising paragraph in the Bar-Ilan speech (two states for two peoples), Bibi managed to swiftly erase his statement's impression by setting conditions, insisting on continuing the construction in the territories and mainly in angering the U.S. administration.... A peace agreement with Syria has a price, but isn't it better to reach the agreement and pay for it now, before Syria is driven to a war sponsored by Iran? The unsolved mystery is why, if Bibi is so hesitant, in surveys the answer to the question who is more suitable for prime minister, is 43 percent for Bibi, compared to 5 percent for Barak? The explanation is that the public has become more right-wing and the Likud more radical. Netanyahu has prepared a list of delaying tactics. The Palestinians are playing into his hands by threatening to declare unilaterally a Palestinian state, which is a recipe for an enforced solution or, heaven forbid, a third Intifada.

II. Last Call for the Palestinian Authority

Shaul Arieli, a member of the board of directors of the Council for Peace and Security and one of the architects of the Geneva Initiative, wrote in Ha'aretz (11/17): In Cast Lead Israel decided to leave control of the Gaza Strip in the hands of Hamas, understanding that the only alternative was resumption of Israeli rule there, with all its disastrous implications. The disintegration of the PA would perhaps generate a storm of exultant we told you so from right-wingers, but it would also obligate Israel to reassume responsibility for ruling over the lives of more than two million Palestinians in the West Bank. In the absence of a suitable candidate to succeed Abbas (assuming that Marwan Barghouti, who has declared that he will contest the election, could not do so from his Israeli prison cell), the breakup of the PA is not an unreasonable scenario.... Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who time and again speaks of the need to make a distinction between Gaza and the West Bank, must act to make this concept a reality and to again give the West Bank Palestinians the sense that there is benefit in a diplomatic solution. Israel must create the conditions that will in the short run enable the realization of the Fayyad plan to build a Palestinian state from the bottom up and in the long run the resumption of negotiations with an agreed agenda and time frame for completing negotiations on a final-status arrangement.

III. Yes to a Palestinian State

Conservative Op-Ed Page Editor Ben-Dror Yemini wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (11/17): After Netanyahu said yes [to Palestinian statehood], [the Palestinians] also remembered. Israeli opposition will give points to the Palestinians and Israel will again be depicted as refusing an agreement. So Israel should not jump like donkey from the top of the cliff and shout help! We must always, absolutely always, say yes, and only afterwards set conditions. Because if this is a trap, there is no need for Israel to do exactly what the Palestinians want and say no. That would be another Palestinian victory. And if this is an historic change, then we should certainly say yes, and only afterwards, of course, say that the permanent borders and security arrangements and more and more things -- are not a matter for a unilateral declaration. In an inversion of what [hard-line PLO leader] Farouk Kaddoumi said, the problem was never a Palestinian state. The problem was and remains the right of return. There is no drama in consenting to a Palestinian state. They have always wanted it, provide this is greater Palestine by means of the right of return. Israel must return the ball to them. Yes to a state. No to the right of return and to greater Palestine.

IV. Salam Fayyad's Bar-Ilan Speech

Deputy Editor-in-Chief Uri Elitzur, who was director of the Prime Minister's Office during Netanyahu's first term, wrote in the editorial of the nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe (11/17):

QIt is not the stalemate in the negotiations that led to the idea of [Palestinian statehood], but the movement around them. What made the Palestinian leaders threaten a unilateral move was the Bar-Ilan speech. The man who caused Salam Fayyad's declaration was Benjamin Netanyahu. The Arabs know that proclaiming statehood will not change anything in the reality on the grounds. They cannot forcibly remove the IDF and the settlers; neither can they take over roads and the air space nor build instruments of state or an independent economy. A declaration of independence per se will only be words. What they want to achieve is not an actual state but international recognition of their state within the borders they have determined and according to the conditions that they dictate while ignoring Israel's positions.

IV. QThick Prophets

Conservative columnist Amos Carmel wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (11/17): Q[Former U.S. President Bill] Clinton's mention of [what would have happened had Yitzhak Rabin not have been assassinated] is pure speculation -- for instance, the assumption that had he not rightly earned his victimhood, he [was unlikely to have been reelected.... Perhaps the wise Clinton knows how it would have been possible to reach a Qjust and lasting peace within three years.

12. Anti-Terrorism Efforts:

Block Quotes:

QA Matter of Justice

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (11/17): QIt wasn't Osama bin Laden (OBL) who came up with the idea of using airliners as ballistic missiles. The scheme had to be sold to him by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM).... On Friday, U.S. Attorney-General Eric Holder announced that KSM, the brains behind the 9/11 plot, in U.S. custody since March 2003, would be put on trial in Manhattan federal court along with his co-conspirators.... All face the death penalty. Holder insisted that the decision to forgo a military trial and place the case before a civilian jury sitting just blocks from Ground Zero was his decision alone; that President Barack Obama was informed after the fact because the President, himself a lawyer, did not want to intrude in the justice system. But aren't the 9/11 attacks more a matter of national security than of criminal justice?

Holder's decision regrettably treats what the conspirators did as a major crime rather than an act of war. Moreover, it provides KSM with the opportunity to turn the trial into an enormous Qreality TV extravaganza, in the words of New York Times columnist David Brooks.

It gives Islamist terrorists fresh incentives to target New York City. It risks exposing in open court the methods U.S. intelligence employs to combat Muslim extremists. Finally, although Holder insinuated that federal prosecutors have ample admissible evidence against the plotters, an open, possibly televised trial, will divert attention from the conspiracy to the fact that KSM -- a Qticking bombQ if ever there was one -- was repeatedly tortured. This will not play well on Al-Jazeera.... Holder's protestations about a Qshow trialQ notwithstanding, the U.S. Justice Department -- with President Obama out of the loop -- may have inadvertently handed KSM a world-class stage to rationalize 9/11.

CUNNINGHAM